

Washington, DC - Now that an application for designating the City of Newburgh as a High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) has been submitted, Congressman Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Congressman John Hall (D-NY), U.S. Senator Charles Schumer (D-NY) and U.S. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) are now calling on President Obama's Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to act quickly to grant the designation, which would enhance future coordination of federal, state and local law enforcement agencies by providing equipment, technology and additional resources to combat the drug trafficking on which gangs thrive.

In their letter to the ONDCP Director Gil Kerlikowske, the House and Senate members urged quick approval of the petition submitted by Chauncey Parker, Director of the New York /New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), seeking a HIDTA designation for Orange County, New York. In May, the same group sent a letter to Parker, requesting that he work with local law enforcement officials to initiate the petition process necessary to secure the designation.

Under the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988 and the ONDCP Reauthorization Act of 1998, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is authorized to designate areas that exhibit serious drug trafficking problems as HIDTAs.

Relative to other municipalities across the country, Newburgh has seen disproportionately high rates of assaults and murders in the last several years, making the city among the most violent in the nation per capita. The violence in this small city of 29,000 residents is so pronounced that it has drawn the attention of the Obama administration. HIDTA-designated counties comprise approximately 14 percent of U.S. counties, and exist in 45 states, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia

Law enforcement organizations within HIDTAs assess drug trafficking problems and design specific initiatives to reduce or eliminate the production, manufacture, transportation, distribution and chronic use of illegal drugs and money laundering. Through a combination of joint initiatives and resource and information sharing, the HIDTA program helps improve the effectiveness of drug control efforts.

See the full text of the letter to Kerlikowske below.

August 4, 2010

R. Gil Kerlikowske
Director
Office of National Drug Control Policy
Executive Office of the President
Washington DC 20503

Dear Director Kerlikowske:

We are writing to urge you to quickly approve the petition recently submitted by Chauncey Parker, Director of the New York /New Jersey High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), seeking a HIDTA designation for Orange County, New York.

The petition submitted to the Office of National Drug Control Policy accurately describes the serious crime problem within Newburgh, New York and the impact of drug flow to the surrounding area. Relative to other municipalities across the country, Newburgh, has seen disproportionally high rates of assault and murder in the last several years -- making Newburgh among the most violent cities per capita in the nation. This year, Newburgh received national attention for its exceptionally high rates of gang and drug-related crime. In May, the Department of Justice collaborated with local law enforcement in an unprecedented show of force in the city of Newburgh that resulted in the arrest of 76 gang members. We commend the timely and decisive action of all the local and federal law enforcement officers involved. Unfortunately, this issue is far from resolved. There must be an ongoing effort to ensure that gang and drug violence is dealt with effectively in the future.

A HIDTA designation for this area would allow for increased collaboration between the local, state and federal law enforcement agencies that will improve communication and information sharing and allows for more effective policing. This designation would also enable the federal government to invest more resources in Newburgh such as equipment and technology. Given the clear and persistent drug and gang-related violence in Newburgh, we urge you to approve this new HIDTA designation without delay.

Sincerely,

Maurice D. Hinchey

John Hall

Charles Schumer

Kirsten Gillibrand